

March 8, 2010

Education Committee
Room 3100, Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

Re: HB 5425, Sections 2 and 3

Dear Education Committee:

Our names are Mark and Marinelle Mayo, we reside in Fairfield, CT and are the proud parents of a 15-year old boy in the autistic spectrum. We are writing you because we strongly urge you to **OPPOSE Section 3 of HB 5425** which would move the burden of proof in due process hearings from the school districts to the "moving party", which is almost without exception, the parents. This would make it impossible for parents (who do *not* have the financial and professional resources of a school district behind them) to protect our child's educational rights effectively. As parents, it is our child's right to ensure a meaningful and independent life, and opposing Section 3 of HB 5425 would allow us the means to continue to advocate for our children.

Allowing Section 3 of HB 5425 would not allow a level playing field for the parties involved since it would skew so far in the district's favor (unlimited professional and monetary resources) that most parents would be intimidated before the process even began. It is unfair to ask parents of special needs parents to bear the additional burden of proving that a school district is out of compliance.

We are also writing to ensure that you **SUPPORT Section 2 of HB 5425** which states that only those with a credential in behavior analysis are utilized by public schools to oversee implementation of children's IEP's when these services are called for on an Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

Our son attended Fairfield public schools for six years and we saw minimal educational and social progress after exhausting all the resources (which included a consultation with a behavioral analyst) available to us through the system. As a result of the lack of progress, escalating anxiety and behavioral issues, we enrolled our son in the Connecticut Center for Child Development in Milford, which employs the Applied Behaviorial Analysis (ABA) method to teach autistic children. In the past three years our son has attended this school, he has made significant academic and social progress because of the methodologies and well-written program employed by the highly-trained staff. We are grateful that this type of school now exists for our son because we had not realized how successful an ABA program can be. As parents who see significant positive gains in our son, we are cognizant of how skilled and informed school staff must be in order to implement an ABA program for the autistic population.

We have great safeguards in place for consumers of a wide variety of services yet those working with some of our most disabled students are not monitored in any way. We are hoping you will join our effort to protect the health and well being of the children we cherish, the parents who love them, and the school districts who have to pay the bill. **We beg you to please oppose Section 3 and support Section 2 of HB 5425.**

Sincerely,

Mark T. Mayo and Marinelle Mayo
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